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New York

Chairperson: Mr. de Klerk ..... (Netherlands)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

General exchange of views (*continued*)

Mr. Pant (Nepal): I wish to congratulate you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on your election. The chairmen of the two working groups also deserve our felicitations and best wishes.

Nepal associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his insightful remarks. I also take this opportunity to put on record our appreciation of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Sergio Duarte, for his active leadership.

Let me begin by making a few remarks on the theme "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons". Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation have remained the most profound aspirations of our time. However, the successive failures of disarmament meetings over the past few years to find common ground have brought us to a standstill, with no progress in sight.

The disarmament agenda has not always been fraught with failures. There have been some glorious moments as well. Not too long ago, the permanent extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1995 was a major achievement, and was followed by the successful conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Those positive developments finally led to the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, which was a big success. It not only promulgated the 13 practical steps towards nuclear disarmament, but also enjoyed the support of the nuclear-weapon States. The real challenge before us today is therefore to build upon those positive experiences and to regenerate the necessary political will and momentum for the way forward.

Nuclear-weapon States may perceive nuclear weapons as tools of deterrence, but they represent an appalling threat to human civilization. Furthermore, the increasing proliferation of nuclear weapons technology and the palpable danger of such technology, or even of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists, compound our apprehension of a nuclear mishap.

Nepal, as a State party to the NPT, strongly believes that the Treaty forms the bedrock of the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regimes, and underlines the need to make it universal. It is our view that the three pillars of nuclear disarmament are equally important and mutually reinforcing, so their sanctity has to be fully preserved. We also believe that the ultimate objective of the international community, as set forth at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, should be geared towards achieving general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

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As an urgent step, the initiative to conclude a universal and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear States has become imperative. Quite logically, the onus lies with the nuclear-weapon States to lead by setting an example. It is our principled position that the only certainty against the use of nuclear weapons is their total elimination.

It is pertinent to underline here that, in the face of the real threats of unbridled proliferation and the misuse of nuclear materials, the need to strengthen the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency has become more pronounced. Similarly, as a corollary to nuclear disarmament, the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the conclusion of the proposed fissile material cut-off treaty are indispensable. In the same vein, we strongly oppose the weaponization of outer space and support the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, including regional initiatives towards that end.

Turning to the second theme, "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms", my delegation would like to recognize the efforts made at the previous sessions of the Commission that have led to some progress in the work of Working Group II. My delegation feels that confidence-building measures undertaken particularly under the aegis of the United Nations and other multilateral processes would contribute most to fostering an environment of international peace and security. Such measures contribute to promoting transparency and reduce tensions at the global level. They also help to mitigate, among other things, the threats of conventional weapons, particularly in conflict zones all over the world.

Likewise, regional mechanisms could complement efforts at the global level by creating a climate conducive to effective collaboration among regional stakeholders. It is, however, important that confidence-building measures, irrespective of who undertakes and implements them, take into account the specific conditions of the respective countries or regions.

In that respect, Nepal believes that the United Nations Regional Centres for peace and disarmament have meaningful roles to play. Let me take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Office of the High Representative for the progress it has made towards relocating the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific to Kathmandu. We look forward to the inauguration of the Regional Centre in Kathmandu in July this year. I would like to take this opportunity to affirm, on behalf of the Government of Nepal, our full cooperation during the relocation and in the conduct of the Centre's activities. We are confident that the Centre will be able to function effectively, including in the area of confidence-building in the region, reinvigorating the Kathmandu process. We sincerely appreciate the generous cooperation of the international community in ensuring the resources required by the Centre to carry out substantive works, as per its mandates. In that regard, I wish to inform the Commission that the Government of Nepal is committed to providing the operational costs of the Centre.

Progress on disarmament matters will continue eluding us as long as we hold on to our entrenched positions without accommodating broader mutual interests. It is therefore high time that the international community broke free of its inhibition to engage in genuine efforts to promote the disarmament agenda, particularly that of nuclear disarmament. To move forward, it is essential to discard the misleading notion of fragmented security and to work concertedly towards consolidating collective security.

In conclusion, the disarmament agenda requires political wisdom on the part of its main players. It is absolutely necessary to commit ourselves to making this session a success, paving the way for a constructive engagement during the upcoming NPT Preparatory Committee meeting in Geneva. As we approach the end of the three-year cycle at this session, the international community cannot afford to squander yet another opportunity to work with a sense of unity.

Mr. Hong Je Ryong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I would like, first of all, on behalf of the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at its 2008 substantive session.

Before referring to the agenda items now before us, please allow me to express our view on the present situation of the Korean peninsula and the resolution of the nuclear issue, which have become of major concern worldwide.

An extremely tense situation has recently been in the making on the Korean peninsula due to the reckless

acts of anti-Democratic People's Republic of Korea and anti-reunification forces at home and abroad. As is well known to the world, the United States-South Korea Key Resolve and Foal Eagle joint military exercises were conducted throughout South Korea in early March this year. In light of their scale and nature, those manoeuvres, for which the latest military hardware — including the nuclear-powered ultra-large carrier Nimitz and a nuclear-powered guided-missile submarine — were mobilized, are a nuclear war rehearsal to attack the Democratic People's Republic of Korea by force of arms. Furthermore, most recently, violent remarks concerning a pre-emptive strike at the nuclear base of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea were openly made by a high-ranking South Korean military official.

It is regrettable, indeed, that such attempts have been made to set the situation on the Korean peninsula, which had been positive until last year and were moving towards reconciliation and cooperation, back to a phase of confrontation.

A peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue through dialogue and negotiations has been the consistent stand of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Our ultimate goal in its resolution is to denuclearize the Korean peninsula as a whole. With that goal in mind, we have patiently made every possible effort to implement the Joint Statement of 19 September 2005 and its consequent agreements of 13 February and 3 October 2007.

The disabling of the Nyongbyon nuclear facilities is already over 90 per cent complete, and a report on the nuclear declaration was drafted and conveyed to the United States side in November last year. An exceptional measure was also taken on our part to allow the United States experts to see even sensitive military objects and to provide them with samples with a view to clarifying the issue of so-called suspected uranium enrichment raised by the United States. As requested by the United States, we also reconfirmed our commitment not to proliferate nuclear technology when that country was the first to raise the issue of suspected nuclear cooperation. In other words, we have been doing what we are supposed to do, and far beyond our obligations.

The fundamental principle for the resolution of the nuclear issue is the simultaneous action that was agreed upon at the Six-Party Talks. However, the United States has not yet honoured its commitments to remove the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from the list of terror sponsors and to terminate the application of The Trading with The Enemy Act.

If the United States is sincere in its attitude to the denuclearized Korean peninsula, it should prove the abandonment of its hostile policy against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea through practical actions, as it has pledged to do, and refrain from setting up obstacles to the resolution of the nuclear issue by antagonizing the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with such acts as joint military exercises with South Korea. The South Korean authorities should also behave properly, in conformity with the historic 15 June Joint Declaration and the 4 October declaration, rather than take a confrontational path against my nation. That is the only way to achieve the common prosperity of the Korean nation and to ensure peace and security on the Korean peninsula and beyond.

The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will remain unchanged in its approach to developing inter-Korean relations and achieving independent reunification, peace and prosperity, in conformity with the historic 15 June Joint Declaration and the October 4 declaration.

My delegation is of the view that the current session should be seized as an opportunity to make a tangible contribution to realizing the earnest desire of all humankind for a nuclear-free world. The root cause of the proliferation of nuclear weapons, of so much concern to many countries, is the existence of nuclear weapons and the threat to use them. Therefore, the nuclear-weapon States — particularly the United States, with the largest nuclear arsenal in the world — need to make a due contribution to achieving the objectives of this session by committing themselves to nuclear disarmament towards the eventual total elimination of nuclear weapons.

In continuation of my statement, please allow me to respond to the statement made yesterday by the South Korean representative on the issue of the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, just to provide a better understanding to all representatives present here.

The representative of the Republic of Korea said in his statement yesterday that putting reliable confidence-building measures in place between the two

Koreas is essential for the further promotion of inter-Korean reconciliation and cooperation. I doubt whether he had a correct understanding of confidence-building measures before making such remarks. As a matter of fact, there are no confidence-building measures more reliable than the historic 15 June Joint Declaration and the 4 October declaration, announced at the summit between the North and South of Korea in June 2000 and October 2007, respectively.

Those declarations were supported and welcomed by the United Nations membership as well. Ever since the publication of the 15 June Declaration, inter-Korean relations, once confrontational and distrustful, had begun moving towards reconciliation and cooperation. The world's peoples, expressing relief at the possible developments on the Korean peninsula, sincerely hoped for their continuation towards eventual reunification.

But what are the realities today? The present ruling conservative forces of South Korea have disrupted overnight the confidence that had been accumulated with painstaking efforts between the North and South of Korea over the past several years, thus bringing present relations to the brink of collapse.

The South Korean representative also said in his statement that the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula is the key to security on the peninsula, which in turn will provide the basis of other cooperative projects between the two Koreas. That only reveals his scant knowledge of the root causes of the nuclear issue and the ramifications of the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

The nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula has come to the fore as the United States has brought nuclear weapons into South Korea, posing a nuclear threat to my country. It is well known that the current United States Administration went so far as to designate my country as part of an axis of evil and a target of pre-emptive nuclear strikes. Under those circumstances, we had no other option but to possess nuclear weapons as a defensive means to safeguard our supreme national interest and security.

The emergence of the political issue on the Korean peninsula is partly the responsibility of the South Korean authorities, who permitted United States nuclear weapons to be brought in and have participated in a series of nuclear-war exercises against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In addition, the first thing done by the present conservative ruling forces of South Korea was allowing the United States to bring its super-large nuclear-powered carrier, its nuclear submarines and its other ultramodern nuclear hardware to South Korea and to stage a nuclear-war exercise against our nation. They are now contemplating participating in the so-called Proliferation Security Initiative military defence system, which even their predecessors had hesitated to do.

Denuclearization of the Korean peninsula is not for half of the peninsula, but for the peninsula as a whole. It is for that reason that the 19 September 2005 Joint Statement resulting from the Six-Party Talks clearly stipulates the respective obligations of the United States and the Republic of Korea, on the basis of the principle of simultaneous action.

All those facts constitute a clear indication that the keys to security on the Korean peninsula are an end to the hostile policy of the United States towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and a change in the attitude of the South Korean authorities, who obey outside forces and seek confrontation with my country. Our powerful military deterrent is a guarantee of peace and security on the Korean peninsula and beyond, making it possible for North Korea and South Korea to witness historic events such as the publication of the 15 June and 4 October Declarations and to facilitate cooperation aimed at reconciliation between the two sides. I would be more than happy if this opportunity were seized by the delegation of the Republic of Korea as a chance to better understand the issue of denuclearization and the current situation on the Korean peninsula.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): It is always a pleasure to come back to the Disarmament Commission. I had the privilege and honour of chairing the Commission in 1997 in a much better political climate, which enabled us to reach a good agreement. Perhaps that was the only agreement that has been reached during the work of the Commission to date. In 1997, as compared with what is happening now, approximately 40 to 50 ambassadors came from Geneva to the Disarmament Commission to discuss what we were going to do about weapons of mass destruction, conventional weapons and small arms and light weapons. I hope that the spirit that prevailed in the past will soon be revived and that we will witness another success, under your able

guidance, Mr. Chairman, and that of the rest of the Bureau.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

The delegation of Egypt is pleased to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at the present session and also congratulates the other members of the Bureau. We trust that your wisdom and your recognized expertise will lead the present session to a successful outcome. The delegation of Egypt reaffirms its full cooperation with you, with the other members of the Bureau and with all other delegations, as well as with the High Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Duarte, and the Steering Group on Disarmament and Development, to attain that objective.

The delegation of Egypt associates itself with the statements made by the Permanent Representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and by the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

The international community continues to witness an increasing number of challenges to international security and regional stability and to the credibility of existing international treaties and conventions. Egypt views the existing regional and international disarmament and non-proliferation environment with concern, particularly as it relates to the international community's respect for its traditional priorities as embodied in international conventions, United Nations resolutions and decisions taken in other, related international forums.

Although the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament identified the goal of nuclear disarmament as the key priority for international disarmament and arms control efforts, the world continues to witness setbacks in achieving nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and in attaining the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which is the cornerstone of the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

In the area of nuclear disarmament, the multilateral efforts of the five nuclear-weapon States remain extremely limited, especially as compared with the commitments undertaken by those States under the Treaty. With regard to non-proliferation, we continue to witness efforts to place priority on non-proliferation in the absence of parallel progress in the area of nuclear disarmament, on the basis of an imagined linkage between non-proliferation and limiting the inalienable right of non-nuclear-weapon States to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. That poses a challenge to the principles of the NPT and the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the field of nuclear verification.

Although the NPT's indefinite extension in 1995 came in the context of a package agreement including the resolution on the Middle East, which links the validity of such an extension to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, we have seen no tangible progress in the implementation of the resolution since its adoption. Indeed, the international community has shown little resolve in persuading Israel, as well as other non-parties to the NPT, to join it as non-nuclear-weapon States. That lack of resolve has become a threat to the very principle of the Treaty's universality.

Among the serious challenges jeopardizing the principles and objectives of the NPT is the danger of seeking to amend the guidelines of the Nuclear Suppliers Group in order to permit nuclear cooperation with States not party to the NPT. That would fundamentally contradict the letter and spirit of the NPT and the Decision on Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, which was adopted as part of the package indefinitely extending the NPT. Such a development would forever eliminate the opportunity to destroy nuclear weapons developed outside the NPT regime and the opportunity for NPT non-parties to join it as non-nuclear-weapon States in order to achieve the Treaty's universality. The results would be the loss of the NPT's credibility and usefulness and the collapse of the global non-proliferation and disarmament regime, whose cornerstone is the Treaty.

Egypt firmly believes in the principles and objectives of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We are of the view that the failure of efforts to make progress in implementing existing international treaties and resolutions must not make it possible to renege on existing commitments or to reinterpret those commitments in a manner that would serve certain political agendas that do not enjoy the support of the international community.

In parallel with our efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament through the NPT, we must make States not parties to the NPT firmly understand that it is they who are outside the international consensus and that the so-called new consensus spoken of by some is both unacceptable and invalid — substantively and in reality. Indeed, the international consensus on which the NPT was built still exists, and it has not and will not change, as it is based on the balance between a commitment by recognized NPT nuclear-weapon States to destroy their nuclear arsenals and a commitment by non-nuclear-weapon States to refrain from seeking to acquire nuclear weapons.

Despite the reluctance of nuclear-weapon States to honour their disarmament commitments under the Treaty, those who develop military nuclear programmes outside the NPT do not have the right to call themselves nuclear-weapon States. Nor does it give them an excuse not to comply with their obligation to disarm. That is an illusion that would put an end to the non-proliferation regime. The issue therefore needs to be firmly and effectively addressed in a multilateral international context, under wise and responsible guidance, in order to address the threat that nuclear weapons pose to humankind. That would allow no room for destructive, power-hungry ambitions or twisted and false principles. The 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will provide such a context.

With a view to contributing to the success of the upcoming second session of the Preparatory Committee of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, scheduled to begin in Geneva at the end of April 2008, the work of the Disarmament Commission should be aimed at the implementation of the resolutions and decisions of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and the 13 practical steps agreed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference, as a plan of action that enhances the credibility of the Treaty and its review process. Egypt is prepared to make every effort, through the deliberations of the Commission and the second session of the Preparatory Committee, to maintain and strengthen the credibility of the non-proliferation regime, without politicization, selectivity or double standards.

Egypt considers combating and preventing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons an important objective of the international community, and one that requires States to collectively seek its fulfilment. In that context, we see no better instrument to rely on than the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, agreed in 2001 as a politically binding framework. Egypt has been consistently committed to fully implementing the Programme of Action and has regularly submitted the relevant national reports. We look forward to a collective effort by the international community to reassert the credibility of the Programme of Action through the successful conclusion of the third Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action, to be held in New York in July 2008, where, as representative of the African Group in the Bureau, we will seek a successful outcome, given the importance of this issue to States of the African continent.

Mr. Argüello (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, first of all, to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your appointment to guide the work of the 2008 session of the Disarmament Commission. I take this opportunity to also extend my greetings to the Chairmen of the two Working Groups, Mr. Jean-Francis Zinsou of Benin and Mr. Carlos Perez of Brazil. We wish them success in their work and promise them our delegation's full cooperation to that end. I would also like to acknowledge the presence among us of Sergio Duarte, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

I associate myself with the statement delivered yesterday by the representative of Mexico on behalf of the Rio Group, which included the basic principles of my country's position on nuclear disarmament and on confidence-building measures.

The Argentine Republic believes that there is scope for the revitalization of existing disarmament bodies. In recent years, we have witnessed few results in the tasks that we as Member States have assigned ourselves in addressing challenges to international peace and security. However, those recent experiences must not discourage us from the continuous quest to strengthen multilateralism and, in particular, the United Nations as an efficient tool to deal with those challenges and create a safer world for our citizens.

The recent sessions of the Disarmament Commission have not been exempt from the lack of results seen in other forums. As a universal deliberative body, it reflects the difficulty of steadily breathing new

life into political will and translating it into practical recommendations to be implemented at the global, regional and national levels.

This session thus provides us with a unique opportunity to achieve consensus on the two substantive items on our agenda: nuclear disarmament and confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. We have a substantive foundation within the two Working Groups upon which to advance in a concrete manner during the current session. Keeping in mind that this is the last year in the three-year cycle, we appeal to delegations to show the political flexibility necessary to successfully conclude the work of the Commission. We believe that we must advance in all areas of debate. But we must also be realistic in view of the complexity of the issues being discussed. That is why we must not allow progress in one area to determine the advances achieved in others. In other words, to restrict our work to parallel developments in all areas would only lead us to failure, something that I am certain we all wish to avoid.

My country, Argentina, is firmly committed to nuclear disarmament. We are convinced on principle, by conviction and because as a producer and consumer of nuclear energy and materials, we believe that we have a special responsibility. Our country has given priority to the issue of nuclear disarmament and has made significant efforts in the field at the national, bilateral, regional and global levels.

Since the adoption of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the region of Latin America and the Caribbean has been a pioneer in the quest for a world free of nuclear weapons. However, regional action, no matter how important and praiseworthy, cannot replace in scope or impact universal action. In that regard, we are all charged with a universal responsibility.

As the representative of a country that is part of a very populous nuclear-weapon-free zone, I reiterate the appeal to all nuclear-weapon States to renew their efforts to fulfil the objectives of article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which continues to be the cornerstone of the regime of disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful use of nuclear energy. In addition, and keeping in mind that some Member States of this Commission have not yet joined the Treaty, we urge them to reconsider that decision and join the regime as non-nuclear-weapon States. In particular, I would like to express our profound concern over the lack of implementation of the 13 practical steps recommended in the final document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. Unfortunately, those measures, agreed upon eight years ago, continue to be needed today due to their lack of implementation.

Let me stress that a more effective response to the challenges facing us in the field of the proliferation of nuclear weapons would be possible if the nuclear-weapon States were willing to accept the complete elimination of those weapons. The situation is further worsened by the growing readiness to include nuclear weapons in new security doctrines. Contradictory speech cannot be allowed on this issue: we cannot sing the praises of non-proliferation while developing more sophisticated nuclear weapons. The destruction of current arsenals is thus delayed, and the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is impeded.

The Argentine Republic is ready to contribute to a common, shared agreement on the immediate need for disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. We hope that during the current session, all member States will share this fundamental premise and will, with creativity, identify steps to be taken immediately to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons at last.

Allow me to refer briefly to the second substantive item on our agenda, as the representative of a country belonging to one of the regions that has made the most progress in the implementation of confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. As in the case of nuclear disarmament, the Latin American and Caribbean region has been a pioneer in the implementation of confidence-building measures. We have witnessed the benefits that they have brought in safeguarding peace and consolidating democracy in the Americas by allowing for greater transparency and dialogue among the countries of the hemisphere.

The goal of the confidence-building measures is to reduce uncertainties and misperceptions regarding the behaviour of States, thus diminishing the risk of military confrontation. With that principle in mind, Argentina has submitted a draft resolution every year since the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly that aims at, inter alia, strengthening the exchange of information on confidence-building measures. Pursuant to these resolutions, which have been adopted by

consensus with an average of 100 sponsors, we have created a computerized database that facilitates regular consultations on the progress achieved in designing and implementing measures around the world. We hope Member States will make use of that tool to consolidate a mechanism of additional transparency within the United Nations.

Lastly, we would like to say that, even if there are those who repeatedly seek to discredit the usefulness of the Commission, we believe that, to the contrary, the current international security situation affords us an opportunity to reflect on the need to reaffirm its value. Since reaching agreements on innovative and creative recommendations will not be possible without the necessary political will, we believe that the Commission, thanks to its deliberative nature, provides an appropriate context for an open dialogue that will foster greater understanding of all national positions. It is our duty to continue believing in the existing disarmament bodies as tools for the consolidation of international peace and security and thus to respond to the interests of our citizens.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): I congratulate you, Sir, on your election to chair this session of the Disarmament Commission. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau and the Chairs of the two Working Groups, who will work with you. The United Republic of Tanzania associates itself with the statement read out by the representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Indonesia on behalf of the African Group and the Non-Aligned Movement respectively.

Tanzania has consistently supported the efforts of the Secretary-General in promoting and enhancing international peace and security and the work of this Commission to support the attainment of those goals. However, it should be noted from the outset that the Commission is commencing its work this time against the background of the deliberations of the First Committee during the sixty-second session of the General Assembly, which were marred by apprehension and disagreements regarding allegations that some of the nuclear-weapon States are placing their arsenals on alert. That is a frightening reminder of the cold war era. We need unambiguous assurances from all quarters on this sensitive issue.

This substantive session of the Disarmament Commission will deal with two basic agenda items: recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons; and practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. Tanzania abides by its principled positions on nuclear weapons, as adopted at several summits and ministerial meetings, and is supportive of confidence-building measures at all levels in the field of conventional arms for strengthening international peace and security.

While most nuclear-weapon States are insisting on balanced reductions of their arsenals based on the principle of undiminished security, others are calling for complete nuclear disarmament to avoid new instabilities but at the same time refuse to discuss steps towards disarmament with verification. Tanzania calls for complete and total disarmament. We reaffirm the principle that disarmament and non-proliferations are the main pillars of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) regime and call for the universalization of that regime.

It should equally be noted that the differences among nuclear-weapon States on the one hand and between them and the non-nuclear-weapon States on the other on strengthening the NPT regime need to be resolved through negotiated compromises in the interest of international peace and security.

Tanzania believes that it is unreasonable to expect non-nuclear-weapon States to comply with their obligations while the nuclear-weapon States have failed to fulfil their obligations with transparent enforcement and verification measures. Short of that, the NPT regime will remain shaky. The bottom line should be a world without nuclear weapons, with verifiable disarmament and sharing of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes on a non-discriminatory basis.

Conventional weapons are of the highest concern to the developing world in general and to the Great Lakes region of Africa in particular. Tanzania commends the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the European Union, which have pushed the resolution of problems arising from the accumulation of conventional weapons stockpiles and surplus, conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels and an arms trade treaty. Equally, we commend all States that have taken steps towards combating the uncontrolled and illegal transfer of small

arms and light weapons, including man-portable air defence systems.

Tanzania supports an arms trade treaty and the global campaign launched under the banner "What people want", based on the analysis by the Secretary-General on feasibility, scope and draft parameters for an arms trade treaty. Tanzania appreciates the view expressed by a number of States that the arms trade treaty must include all conventional weapons and that the range of activities, including transfers, that fall within the scope of the treaty must be defined clearly. We look forward to the establishment of an open-ended working group in 2009 by the General Assembly to negotiate and agree the terms of a global arms trade treaty.

Tanzania supports the growing consensus among States on the implementation and universalization of the Bacteriological and Toxin Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention. That being the case, Tanzania urges Member States to work for penal legislation and strict export controls on biological agents associated with dual-use technology and equipment. Those measures should be accompanied by the revitalization of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention's confidence-building measures by ensuring the annual submission of reports by all States.

Tanzania has always stressed the linkage between disarmament and development in the context of escalating government expenditures on military capability and armaments and the potential use of such resources for development purposes. All statistical evidence shows that both developed and developing States have enormous expenditures on armaments as compared to allocations for socio-economic development. The propensity to spend on arms should be curbed by generating the political will to implement disarmament measures, by putting in place credible confidence-building measures as disarmament proceeds and by cultivating a culture of peace in current and successive generations. The Disarmament Commission should have a high stake in that process, but the challenge has many stakeholders, including political constituencies and civic organizations of civil society in all countries and their international networks.

Mr. Marrakchi (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to express my delegation's warmest congratulations on your well-deserved election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission. I would like to assure you and, through you, the other members of the Bureau, of the full support of my delegation. I am confident that your experience and wisdom will prove to be a significant asset for a productive conclusion to this final session of the Commission's three-year cycle.

I would also like to welcome the participation of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, at the opening meeting of this session, and to express my delegation's appreciation to Ambassador Sergio Duarte and, through him, the entire staff of the Office for Disarmament Affairs for the commendable efforts they have made throughout the year in following up and managing disarmament issues within the United Nations.

While it endorses yesterday's statements by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM) and by the representative of Benin on behalf of the African Group, as well as the statement made this morning by the representative of Syria on behalf of the Arab Group, the Moroccan delegation, in its national capacity, would like to focus on a number of issues that are of particular importance for the Kingdom.

It is no secret that currently the United Nations disarmament machinery is characterized by inertia, inflexibility of positions — even, in the case of the Conference on Disarmament, deadlock — and regression on some of the achievements of recent years. In this context, the deliberative nature of the Disarmament Commission's work and the universal nature of its membership constitute both an opportunity to show the relevance of the multilateral disarmament system and a test of the goodwill expressed in statements made during disarmament meetings. From this standpoint the Disarmament Commission remains the ideal multilateral framework for debates, consultation and negotiation with a view to drawing up recommendations capable of revitalizing the disarmament process and strengthening the foundations of international peace and security.

With that in mind, we call for all to show a sense of responsibility and we fully support the Secretary-General's statements and his appeal during his introductory statement at this session on the need for all Member States to show a spirit of compromise in order to reach a productive consensus at the end of the Commission's work that can help the United Nations

disarmament machinery to overcome the inertia of the past several years. This will entail the successful conclusion of this session's work and a constructive and productive consensus on the two substantive items on its agenda.

Regarding the first substantive item on the Commission's agenda, Morocco would like to welcome the efforts of the Chairman of Working Group I in drawing up recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. My delegation believes that the Chairman's papers form a good basis for the Commission's discussions; it will spare no effort to contribute to their development, in particular in order to better reflect the central role of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation within the United Nations disarmament system, as emphasized in the paper submitted by the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Kingdom of Morocco, which has signed and ratified all multilateral instruments relating to weapons of mass destruction, including the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), remains committed to general, complete, irreversible, transparent and verifiable nuclear disarmament. We believe that this objective is more than ever of extreme relevance and importance. In this respect, Morocco has consistently worked, including through its membership of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), to strengthen international instruments relating to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, in particular through the earliest possible entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the effective implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons with strict respect for its three pillars: first, the obligation of nuclear Powers to work for general and complete disarmament; secondly, the need for non-nuclear States to fully respect their non-proliferation commitments; and thirdly, the recognized right to the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Morocco has always worked for the respect of the principles of international law in the area of disarmament and believes that, while the universal ideal of disarmament requires the strengthening of United Nations legal mechanisms in that area, it is also true that its concrete implementation takes places, above all, at the regional and subregional levels. That is the philosophy that underlies Morocco's consistent support for the principle of the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, in accordance with the NPT, in particular in Africa and the Middle East.

Morocco reiterates the relevance of the final documents of the 1995 and 2000 NPT Review Conferences, which unfortunately have only partially been implemented. That is the case, in particular, for the 1995 decision on the Middle East and the 13 practical steps adopted in 2000, the fourth of which calls for the immediate establishment in the Conference on Disarmament of an appropriate subsidiary body with a mandate to deal with nuclear disarmament and draw up a convention on that issue.

My delegation would also like to express its thanks to the delegation of Benin for its efforts at the head of Working Group II on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. My delegation believes that the document produced by the Chairman of Working Group II is the result of a long process of discussion and refinement and thus constitutes a good basis for the Commission's work. My delegation hopes that the negotiations that will take place in the upcoming days and weeks will make it possible to reach consensus on that document.

Morocco gives particular attention to the question of confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. We believe that the delicate issue of conventional weapons and, in particular, small arms and light weapons is among the challenges that most threaten and often hinder efforts at reform and development, particularly on the African continent. The absence of regulations and controls on the use, transfer and stockpiling of such weapons contributes to their uncontrolled proliferation in hotbeds of tension, which leads to unsustainable consequences for the stability and security of States, as well as for their socio-economic and human development. Apart from the significant efforts Morocco has made at the national level, which currently give it a great ability to deal with these weapons, we are actively involved in the international community's efforts in that area. Morocco is an active member of the Group of Governmental Experts on ammunition, which ended its second session in New York a week ago.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that with the regrettable failure of the first Small Arms Review Conference, held in 2006, to come to agreement on measures to strengthen the effective implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action Against the

Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, my delegation places even greater hope in the negotiations at this session of the Disarmament Commission reaching the strongest and broadest consensus possible regarding confidence-building measures on conventional weapons.

In conclusion, allow me to emphasize that the Disarmament Committee has a double advantage in making a useful contribution in revitalizing the United Nations disarmament machinery by being both genuinely multilateral and a forum for reflection and discussion rather than decision-making. My delegation hopes that over the coming three weeks, we will all rise to the challenges we are facing and agree on concrete recommendations regarding the decisions necessary for the further development of the multilateral disarmament regime.

Mr. Castellón Duarte (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a pleasure for my delegation to congratulate you, Ambassador de Klerk, on your election to chair the United Nations Disarmament Commission. We would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau and the Chairmen of the Working Groups on their election. We are confident, Sir, that thanks to your rich experience and qualities as a diplomat and the cooperation of member States, this session will yield fruitful results on the two substantive items on the agenda of the cycle that is now ending. I would also like to laud the efforts made in the disarmament field by Mr. Sergio Duarte, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, since he took up his position in 2007. I assure him of my delegation's support and cooperation in the success of his efforts.

The delegation of Nicaragua would like to fully associate itself with the statements made by the representative of Mexico on behalf of the Rio Group and by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

My delegation is concerned over the lack of progress in the area of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation — the lack of progress by nuclear-weapon States in the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. Nicaragua feels that disarmament can be achieved only in a climate of trust, based on mutual respect and tending towards the establishment of better relations based on justice, solidarity and cooperation, and also believes that multilateral, regional and subregional arms control and disarmament agreements make a decisive contribution to achieving a peaceful world free of weapons of mass destruction.

My Government holds the firm conviction that the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, handed down on 8 July 1996, continues to be of immense import as long as we have not achieved complete nuclear disarmament. It clearly provides that States are legally obligated to pursue negotiations in good faith aimed at nuclear disarmament in all its aspects and to bring them to a conclusion as soon as possible.

Despite its imperfections, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has played a crucial role in preventing the propagation of nuclear weapons, promoting cooperation for peaceful uses and in advancing towards complete nuclear disarmament. Here, it is necessary for nuclear-weapon States to fulfil the 13 practical steps agreed upon in 2000, aiming at systematic and progressive implementation of article VI of the NPT.

States parties must comprehensively fulfil the terms of the Treaty and not attempt to reinterpret it or implement it selectively. Thus, there must be respect for the inalienable right of all parties to the Treaty to carry out research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, without discrimination and in compliance with articles I, II and IV of the Treaty.

As a State party to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, Nicaragua reaffirms the appeal made by all the States parties for nuclear-weapon States to withdraw the interpretative statements they made when they joined the Protocols of the Treaty. We also reiterate our solidarity with other nuclear-weapon-free zones and call for the creation or expansion of those existing in other parts of the planet. We also support the speedy entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which would be a significant contribution to the cause of the reduction of nuclear weapons and would prevent their further development.

My delegation is dismayed at the continued manufacture, transfer and circulation on a large scale and illegally of small arms and light weapons and their accumulation in many parts of the world. Small arms and light weapons have characteristics that allow them to be used in actions undertaken by international terrorists, gangs, organized crime and drug traffickers.

The main victims are always innocent civilians. In this sense, it is important for all States, especially those that produce small arms and light weapons, to ensure that they be supplied exclusively to Governments or Government-authorized State entities.

Nicaragua believes that it is of immense importance to have international, regional and bilateral cooperation for the comprehensive implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Nicaragua has thus participated actively at the subregional level in efforts made within the Central American Security Commission for the exchange of information or approval of the specific plan in the fight against the illicit trade in weapons, ammunition, explosives and other related articles, which are being implemented by the police forces of the countries of Central America.

Nicaragua introduced the Central American initiative known as the Programme for Arms Limitation and Control for Reaching a Reasonable Balance of Forces and Promoting Stability, Mutual Confidence and Transparency in Central America, which has been in force since 2003. Its goal is to establish a reasonable balance in the defence and security forces, to set the maximum levels for weapons, to institute modern defence and regional public security policies, and to strengthen the mechanisms for peaceful settlement of disputes.

The Central American Project against the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, approved at the twenty-sixth meeting of the Central American Security Commission, held in Panama on 6 June 2003, on an initiative of Nicaragua, is an intergovernmental effort aimed at strengthening the control of the trade in small arms and light weapons at the regional level. Its main objective is the elimination of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, as well as to regulate and control the use of legal weapons in civilian hands in Central America in order to help lower the rates of crime and violence in the region. The project recently adopted its programme of work for 2008 and has the support of the United Nations Development Programme through the Central American Small Arms Control Project.

In the inter-American sphere, Nicaragua has also ratified a number of legal instruments, such as the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions, the 1992 Inter-American Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, and the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials.

In the area of international security, we have signed and ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime of 2000 and two of its Protocols. We have also enhanced national legislation in the area of control and registering of weapons through the entry into force of our special law on the control and regulation of firearms, munitions, explosives and other related materials and of its regulations. The National Multidisciplinary Commission for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons was formally established on 26 February 2008 pursuant to article 150 of the weapons law which created a technical secretariat and its support group. We also approved the preparation of the Commission's operational plan.

Nicaragua supports the Declaration of the Oslo Conference on Cluster Munitions that acknowledges the severe consequences entailed in the use of cluster bombs and the need for immediate action, and that agreed to conclude by 2008 negotiations on an international instrument that prohibits such weapons for the future. My Government has participated actively in that process.

In 2004, as proof of its commitment to disarmament at the subregional level, Nicaragua unilaterally destroyed 1,000 portable missiles, as part of our determination to encourage concrete action in Central America to achieve a reasonable balance of forces among the States of the region.

As proof of goodwill and within its policy of arms reduction, my Government has begun talks with the Government of the United States of America to negotiate the destruction of 600 man-portable air defence systems in exchange for much-needed medicines and high-tech medical equipment for the country's hospitals.

Last month, President Daniel Ortega met with a medical mission from the United States headed by Mr. John Feeley, Director of the Office of Central American Affairs within the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs of the United States Department of

State, who also visited a number of hospitals to assess their needs.

In conclusion, I would like to recall that the main responsibility of States is to provide their peoples with sustainable development with equal distribution of wealth, thereby meeting their needs in areas including health, nutrition, education, work and adequate housing. The Government of Reconciliation and National Unity of Nicaragua has made a commitment to disarmament, enabling us to reorient resources towards activities that can foster development in order to meet those needs.

Miss Majali (Jordan): I would like to start by congratulating you, Sir, as well as the other Bureau members on being elected and taking charge of this 2008 session of the Disarmament Commission. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation. My delegation is confident that, with your skill and experience, you will do your utmost to ensure a successful outcome of this important session. I also congratulate the Chairmen of the two Working Groups.

I would also like to commend Ambassador Rosseli of Uruguay, Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at the 2007 session, for his efforts during the deliberations that took place last year.

My delegation subscribes to the statement presented by the Ambassador of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

This 2008 session of the Disarmament Commission is the third and final session in our three-year cycle of meetings. That gives our meeting special importance and requires member States to exercise the highest possible flexibility and political will to conclude with a successful outcome. The Secretary-General, who addressed the Commission yesterday, reminded us of that important fact and of the need to work together to reinvigorate our collective efforts to reach our shared goals in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, given their importance to peace and security.

At the 2006 session of the Commission, we succeeded in resuming our work after we were able to agree on its themes for discussion. Against the backdrop of the Commission's inability to reach consensus on specific guidelines or proposals in its previous sessions and the unsuccessful outcomes of important disarmament conferences and meetings, the mere fact that we were able to agree on the agenda items was a step forward.

Today, as we begin our final cycle, what we must keep in mind is that, just as we were able to agree on the two agenda items, it is also possible to reach a consensus on substantive recommendations both for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and for practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms.

My delegation reaffirms the importance of the Disarmament Commission as the specialized deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery. It has succeeded in previous years in submitting concrete recommendations to the General Assembly on how to approach specific disarmament issues, thus contributing towards the emergence of global disarmament norms.

In working to address the first substantive agenda item, entitled "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons", my delegation believes that the best way for our Working Group to advance and have a successful outcome would be to remain focused and consistent in our examination of one single text that would be negotiated as we go along in the process, since presenting a number of texts may only stall our efforts. Moreover, my delegation believes that the following issues, among others, should be kept in mind as we work on drafting our recommendations.

The vision and principles contained in the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly remain valid and relevant. They are neither subject to renegotiation nor in question; no more are the commitments to the aims and principles of the United Nations Charter and to the established norms of international law. All the aforementioned are stone foundations for all our future proceedings, on which any progress in the area of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons can be built. We may wish to add to them to address the current security and implementation challenges. The fact, remains, however that member States should fulfil all their obligations in accordance with the arms control and the international disarmament and non-proliferation regimes.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which rests on three pillars, remains the key instrument in our efforts to halt the vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons. It is the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. What is needed to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the balanced and non-selective implementation of the NPT and all its provisions.

The total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against their use or threat of use. Nuclear-weapon States are urged to implement their unequivocal undertaking to bring about the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, efforts for the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States should be pursued as a matter of priority.

Commitment to and full implementation by all States parties to the package agreed to at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference — which comprises the three decisions and the resolution on the Middle East, as well as the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, in particular with regard to the 13 practical steps — are also necessary.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones remain pivotal for maintaining the international non-proliferation regime and for consolidating international peace and security. While those that have been established in various parts of the world are welcome as positive steps towards attaining the desired objective of nuclear disarmament, efforts to establish new nuclear-weapon-free zones in regions of the world where they do not exist are urged. Here, the establishment of a zone free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, as called for in relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and the outcome of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, is of the utmost importance.

Israel is the only State in the Middle East that is not party to the NPT, thereby preserving its nuclear option. Its accession to the NPT and its implementation of the International Atomic Energy Agency safety measures in all of its unsafeguarded nuclear facilities would therefore contribute to regional peace and security, enhance confidence-building measures between all parties and decrease the potential for nuclear accidents and the risk of radiological contamination, as well as possible nuclear proliferation in the region.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is yet to enter into force. States that have not ratified or acceded to the CTBT, especially those mentioned in annex II of the Treaty, whose ratification is necessary for it to enter into force, are urged to do so.

The deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva must be overcome to allow for negotiations on a convention banning the production of fissile material, as well as a convention on nuclear weapons.

With respect to the deliberations in Working Group II on the agenda item on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons, my delegation urges all States to focus on the remaining issues for resolution. In that regard, my delegation would like to point out that the following issues should be taken into consideration in the outcome of the Working Group's efforts.

Confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms may strengthen international peace and security, but they are neither a substitute nor a precondition for disarmament measures. They are additional measures that can be undertaken to help to create an atmosphere conducive to arms control and disarmament. As such, unilateral, regional and international confidence-building measures are supported.

Confidence-building measures must respond to the needs, realities and particularities of the State or region pursuing them. The implementation of the guidelines for appropriate types of confidence-building measures by all States is of special significance, taking into account the specific political, military and other conditions prevailing in a region.

Transparency in the area of conventional weapons cannot be ensured in the absence of an approach that encompasses all types of weapons in all their aspects. It must stem from a balanced treatment of the various elements of armaments and take into account such inseparable aspects as national capacities for the production, procurement and stockpiling of weapons.

Turning the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms into a more effective component of the regime as a credible confidence-building and early

warning system mechanism is an extremely important goal of our deliberations. That could be done by broadening its scope to include all types of weapons on a non-selective basis and in line with General Assembly resolution 46/36 L. That would further respond to the security needs of many other States and help forge consensus on that important issue.

Finally, my delegation would like once again to assure you, Sir, of all its possible support and cooperation as it works with you, as well as the Chairmen of the Working Groups and members of the Commission, to try to bring about a successful outcome of this session's work.

The Chairman: That brings us to the end of the list of speakers under the general exchange of views.

I call on the representative of Iran to speak in exercise of his right of reply.

Mr. Robatjazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to address Slovenia's inaccurate and misleading statement, made on behalf of the European Union (EU), regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran's peaceful nuclear programme.

Iran's nuclear programme has been, is and will remain totally peaceful. The reports of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), including the most recent one, bear witness to the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear activities. The EU presidency, in its statement, failed to pay attention to the factual information provided by the IAEA that

> "[T]he Agency has been able to continue to verify the non-diversion of declared nuclear material in Iran. Iran has provided the Agency with access to declared nuclear material and has provided the required nuclear material accountancy reports".

The Iranian nation is committed to its obligations and, at the same time, persistent in pursuing and exercising its legal and inalienable rights. The recent IAEA reports clearly indicate that Iran's cooperation with the Agency has been far beyond its treaty obligations and has been proactive. As a result of Iran's proactive cooperation, the workplan has been fully implemented and all outstanding issues have been resolved and closed.

The unjustified and unwarranted focus on peaceful safeguarded nuclear facilities, rather than addressing the existing proliferation threat posed by the unsafeguarded secret nuclear weapons installations of the Zionist regime, is counterproductive and constitutes a dangerous distraction. If the EU continues to turn a blind eye to the Israeli proliferation threat, it will lose its credibility throughout the Middle East region. In that context, we urge the EU to avoid inconsistency of approach to the non-proliferation regime.

The Chairman: I now call on the representative of the Republic of Korea in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Lee Do-hoon (Republic of Korea): Let me be fairly brief because, first, we are near the end of today's meeting and, secondly, because almost everyone in this room is well aware of my country's reputation in the international community.

The Republic of Korea would like to address the claim made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea concerning the Republic of Korea's so-called nuclear war rehearsal and pre-emptive strike against a nuclear base of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

My delegation would like to make it unmistakably clear that that claim is groundless and inconsistent with the facts of the situation. The Republic of Korea would also like to reiterate the message that we previously sent to the North, which is as follows:

> "Our side has sincerely upheld the non-aggression agreement between the South and the North and this position will not change in the future ... The South is always ready to discuss peace and easing tensions on the Korean peninsula."

Let me again refer to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's remarks about confidence-building measures. My new Government has announced the "Denuclearization, Openness, 3000" scheme, which is our plan to cooperate with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea so it can achieve an average per capita income of $3,000 within 10 years if it demonstrates its will to renounce its nuclear capability and open up its society. That is a policy manifestation of our country and represents our hope to reduce tensions through inter-Korean dialogue and resolve the nuclear issue peacefully.

We hope to achieve the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula through a full declaration by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of its nuclear programme, pursuant to the agreements made in February and October 2007, thereby fully implementing the Joint Statement of September 2005.

The Chairman: I give the floor to the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Hong Je Ryong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): As a matter of fact, I do not want to be seen having a quarrel with my fellow countryman, the representative of South Korea. What I have stated here at this session reflects the reality on the Korean peninsula.

First, he said that my statement with regard to the nuclear war rehearsal against my country, conducted by the United States and South Korea, is false, but I say here that it is true. As I stated earlier, in March South Korea and the United States conducted a large military exercise similar in character and scale to nuclear war. Why do they need such kinds of military exercises when a positive atmosphere is prevailing on the Korean peninsula that is conducive to the resolution of the nuclear issue?

As I have said before, the nuclear issue has been generated only by the hostile policy of the United States against my country. The nuclear war exercise is a clear indication that the United States has not yet renounced its policy against my country. Furthermore, South Korea — the same nation as mine — joined that military exercise against my country.

Secondly, the South Korean representative referred to confidence-building measures. What kind of confidence-building measures are needed on the Korean peninsula? I clearly stated in my statement that North and South Korea have the 15 June Joint Declaration and the 4 October declaration, adopted at the summit-level meeting. I think that all the detailed measures clearly indicated in those two declarations are enough, and represent more than confidence-building measures.

The representative of the Republic of Korea talked, again, about the so-called "Denuclearization, Openness, 3000", which means that if the Democratic People's Republic of Korea were to open its doors, South Korea would help North Korea to raise its average per capita income to $3,000. That is quite preposterous. It seems that South Korea is quite generous. That is conditional on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's abandonment of nuclear weapons.

Denuclearization of the Korean peninsula will be possible only when the United States gives up its hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. That is why the bilateral negotiations are taking place. Even today, there was a meeting between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States in Singapore with regard to narrowing their differences and to nuclear declaration. We have already formulated reports on nuclear declaration and have informed the United States. There may be some differences of opinion; that is why there is a need to talk. As long as the threat of the United States and South Korea remains, the nuclear issue will not be resolved.

With regard to the South Korean representative's claim regarding the so-called $3,000, it is quite ridiculous for South Korea to pretend to show generosity, finding fault with the self-supporting national economy of our country and the living conditions of its people, when South Korea has a colonial economy dependent on the United States of America. I would like to tell the South Korean representative that his country should just concern itself with taking care of its own people.

In conclusion, I urge South Korea to gain a correct understanding of the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, to look fairly at the reality prevailing on the Korean peninsula and to refrain from giving false information at this session.

The Chairman: I call on the representative of the Republic of Korea, who wishes to make a second statement in exercise of the right of reply, which is limited to a maximum of five minutes.

Mr. Lee Do-hoon (Republic of Korea): I will be very brief. I just want to make clear that our intention is genuine and sincere concerning confidence-building measures and the implementation of the agreements that we have already entered into with our North Korean brothers. All that we want is implementation in kind on the other side.

The Chairman: I now call on the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Hong Je Ryong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I am sorry to take the floor again, but the South Korean representative has compelled me to do so. In view of our time constraints, I too would like to be very brief.

If South Korea is sincere in its attitude with regard to confidence-building measures, I kindly request that my South Korean colleague urge his Government to renounce its confrontational approach. Things have changed overnight with the new Government in South Korea. We have very good relations with the South Korean Mission, which was involved in formulating the draft General Assembly resolution supporting and welcoming the 4 October 2007 Declaration. Now we are quarrelling again. It is of no use for us to quarrel with each other as parts of the same nation.

The Chairman: That brings us to the end of the first phase of our work, namely, the general exchange of views. It was interesting, intellectually challenging and businesslike. We heard approximately 40 speakers, who presented a comprehensive picture of global disarmament efforts — achievements as well as shortcomings. Responding to the changing international security environment, those statements contained new ideas, specific elements and concrete proposals, which, I am sure, will enrich the discussions within the Working Groups — the next phase of our work. I want to encourage delegations once again to look critically at the statements delivered and to make sure that nothing positive and innovative contained in them is lost.

Tomorrow, both Working Groups are starting their discussions, which, I hope, will be successful. I wish all delegations and both Chairmen good luck in their valiant efforts. Needless to say, I and the other members of the Bureau remain at their disposal.

I also want to briefly revisit what I said about the possible future participation of experts in the deliberations of the Commission. Obviously, that idea touched a chord in delegations, as I have already been approached by a number of them, who have asked me to pursue consultations with the membership of the Commission regarding format, time and other aspects of experts' participation. I intend to do precisely that during the next three weeks. But here, I want to reiterate my plea to delegations to actively engage the Bureau and to bring us their views and ideas so that we can present a workable blueprint for the implementation of a new approach as early as next year.

Before adjourning the meeting, I should like once again to remind delegations that the deadline for submitting names for the list of participants is tomorrow, 9 April, at 6 p.m.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.